2

AN

Expostulatory Address,

TO THE PUBLIC.

BY

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" Nothing is more unjuſt than to judge of a man by too ſhort an acquaintance, and too ſlight inſpection: for it often happens that maturer enquiry diſcovers a radical worth, which may ſhoot out by proper cultivation; and by the breath of candour and approbation be kindled into a flame."

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Expoſtulatory Addreſs,

&c. &c.

IT is the boaſt of Engliſhmen, and the admiration of Foreigners, that both the policy and the habits of this country prevent any of its inhabitants from being condemned unheard :---If Britiſh wiſdom and humanity are thus extended even to the guilty---the innocent may ſurely lay claim to equal protection.

When I advert to the reception I have lately experienced, from ſome of the frequenters to the Mancheſter Theatre (for it would be ungrateful to kinder friends not to acknowledge their interpoſition in my favour) I cannot but lament that any cauſe ſhould have ariſen to produce an effect ſo mortifying to my feelings, and ſo prejudicial to my intereſt.

A very ſlight knowledge of Human Nature is ſufficient to account for, if not to juſtify, emotions of reſentment; but theſe I would ſuppreſs, and rather calmly, nay, even reſpectfully, expoſtulate with my adverſaries in their perſecution

of an harmleſs, well-intentioned candidate for public favour.

There are few profeſſions that have been decked out in more alluring, meretricious colours than that of the drama: The young and thoughtleſs chiefly regard its members as a gay, contented, happy order of perſons; but truth and experience ſtrip off the veil, and diſſipate the deluſion. That there are inſtances where merit or good fortune have raiſed the profeſſors of the hiſtrionic art to enviable diſtinction, I am free to confeſs; but theſe are rare, and judgment ſhould not be formed from the exception, but from the rule.

The life of an actor is not an indolent nor an easy one; his faculties of body and mind are in continued circulation, required by that variety which is the chief support of the stage:---He encounters anxities and mortifications which the world knows not, because it is not a witness of them; his task is never at an end:---The lowest mechanic is more independent, since he usually has but one master; but the player is the servant of the managers, as well as the public: If he succeed (which is not always the case) in pleasing the former, he is uncertain of obtaining the favour of the latter; whatever his capacity or inclination may suggest, he must

ſubmit to the mandate of his employer, which leaves him no choice in his caſt of parts; whatever be his real ſituation or ſtate of mind, he muſt aſſume language----habits----manners---which may be in contradiſtinction to his own; he muſt be gay when he is grave, and divert with merriment the hearts of others when his own is perhaps ſinking under a load of wretchedneſs! Whilſt in other ſtations of life, Hope leads the imagination to anticipate riches or independence, the actor has no ſuch conſolation; his gains are ſmall, his hopes are few, and inſtead of tracing the pleaſing idea of futurity, he ſtrives to avert the recollection, that age will enfeeble his

powers, deprive him of the means of ſubſiſtence, and leave him to neglect and penury!

It will be aſked, what then are the enjoyments of a player? What is it that induces him to enter on ſuch a life of trouble, and afterwards to perſevere in it? I haſten to anſwer, it is PUBLIC APPLAUSE.---Behold the charm that alleviates his diſtreſſes, and invigorates his mind with the expectation of riſing in his profeſſion!---That every thing to a player;---It is his *ſummum bonum*---it comprehends all he wants in the preſent, and all he wiſhes in the future.

How very hard then muſt be the lot of that actor, who ſuddenly finds himſelf deprived of what is ſo eſtimable! To a young candidate for public favor, what muſt be his feelings, when the cup of conſolation juſt reached his lips is daſhed from them, and he becomes not only in riſk of loſing his daily bread, but hurt in his profeſſional reputation, and is endangered in acquiring it hereafter! I cannot believe that my adverſaries have made theſe reflections, for I have a better opinion of their humanity than to ſuppoſe, they would act upon them as they have done. I would meekly aſk, what is my crime? I am a ſtranger, therefore vain would be the appeal to my

former character, which yet would be found reputable; but during my reſidence here, I can boldly urge enquiry into the tenor of my conduct; I have been regular in the diſcharge of my theatrical duties, orderly in my general demeanour, and have not conſciouſly done wrong to any: I know that often in life, words, actions, and even looks, are miſunderſtood, and of courſe miſapplied; if ſuch unluckily has been my lot, I can declare my innocence not only in fact, but in intention; and, ſhould this have been the caſe, I can only regret it, whilſt I cannot help thinking, that the puniſhment is greater than the crime!

But it may be ſaid, "We do not diſpute your arguments, nor your facts; we do not enquire into your moral character; we have little to do with the one, and ſtill leſs with the other; we object not to the man, we only diſlike the actor:" Permit me to ſay, (taking up the queſtion in this point of view) that your cenſure is equally ill-directed; the want of excellence is never imputable as a crime; who ever blamed the blind becauſe his viſual organs were defective? Or the lame that he could not keep pace with convaleſcence and agility? Every candidate for public favor naturally exerts himſelf to the utmoſt, and if he fails he ſufficiently unfortunate in not having

ſucceeded! Candour ſhould diſarm the ſeverity of juſtice, and the faultleſs will ſhould ſanction the faulty deed.

It would ill become me to decide on my own talents and exertions; they are before the public, who is the beſt, and, perhaps, the only, judge of them; but I hope I may be allowed to ſay, that in other Theatres they have experienced a more favorable reception.

A faſtidious critic may here exclaim, ſhall the public then be denied its immemorial right to judge of theatrical ſubjects, and the arbiter of its own pleaſures? Far be

it from me to deny, or even to question, the validity of such right; but I would remark, that means less violent might be used to convey the displeasure of an audience: As the tribute of applause fosters and encourages the performer, the withholding it is sufficiently expressive; the cold negative of silence finds its way to the actor's feelings, and is the fiat that seals his doom!

Not to trespass longer on the attention of the public, I will conclude with a brief valedictory address to both friends and foes.----To the former I pay the tribute of a grateful heart; and, as it is usual for the favored to encroach, I in-

treat the continuance of their protection:----To my foes---but I hope to them I have already ſaid enough; it is my wiſh to ſoothe, not to irritate---to conciliate, not to offend: The former, I truſt, will continue friends; the latter, I hope, will change to them:---May the paſt be forgotten---the future be cheered by protection and favour---then will gratitude ſtimulate exertion, and zeal be excited by the reminiſcence of approbation.

W. CROSS.

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